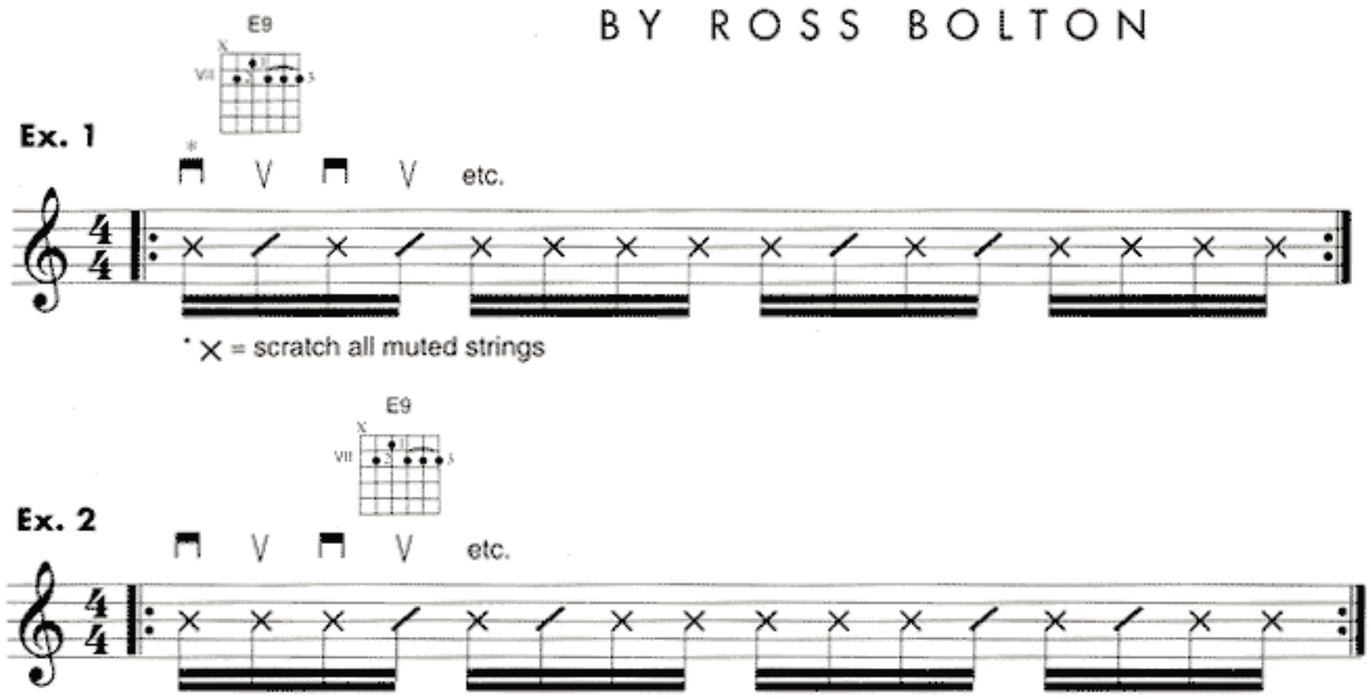
Get Down for the Upstroke

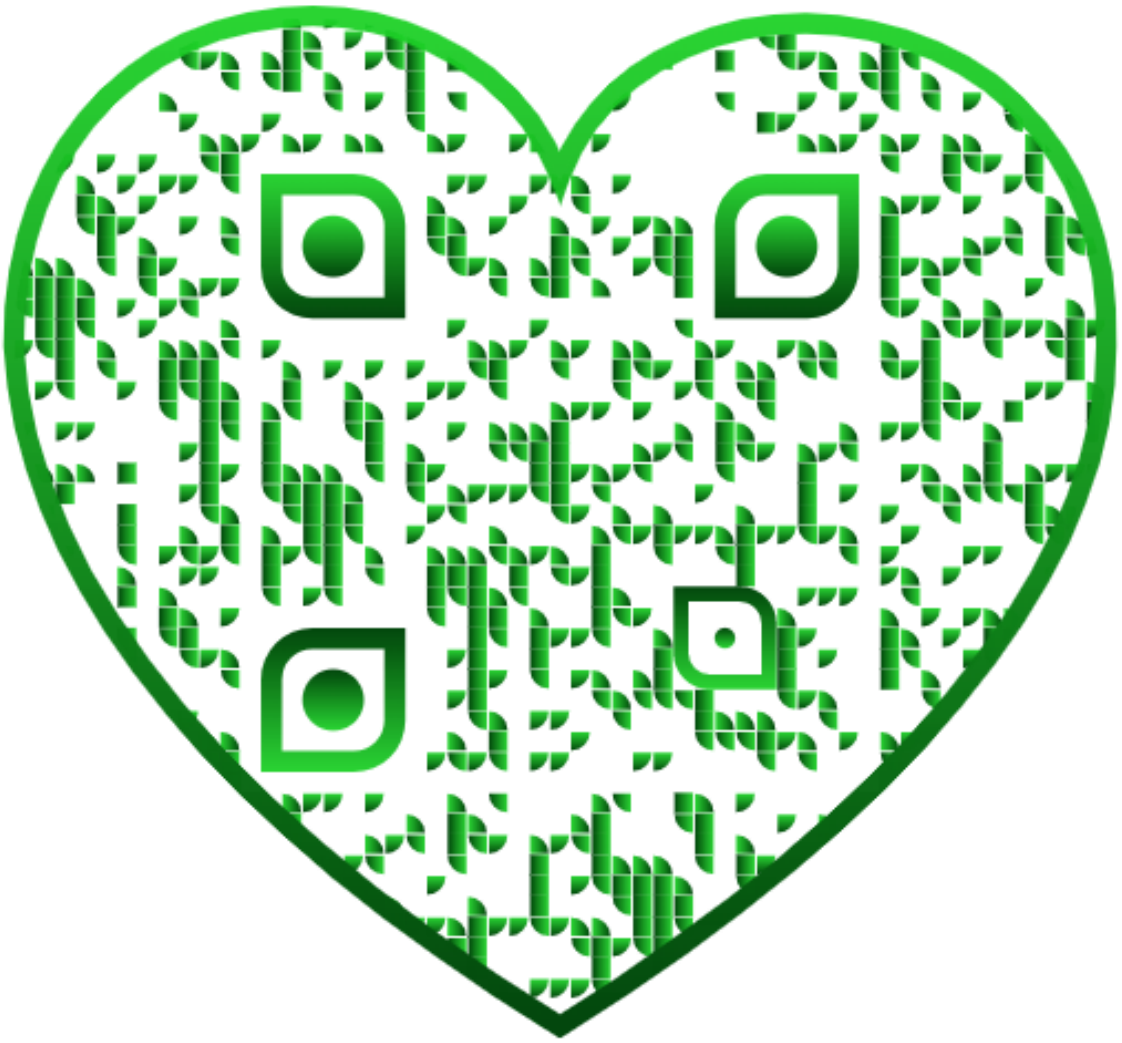
BY ROSS BOLTON



AFTER LEADING HORDES OF students through the Musicians Institute funk-guitar boot camp, I've discovered a universal weakness that dogs both aspiring funkateers and seasoned groove-meisters—a lame upstroke. This dreaded disorder can severely sabotage your groove potential. But fear not! These exercises will get you back in the pocket.

With a metronome or drum machine marking time, begin Examples 1 and 2 by scratching muted sixteenth-notes. (Note: These sixteenths are straight, not swung.) Once you're locked into the groove, add the attacks. Start at around 76 bpm, then work up to faster tempos.

Ex. 3 features an upstroke slide. Resist the temptation to accent or push the slide, and keep a steady up-and-down motion with your picking hand, even though you're *not* strumming the strings on the third sixteenth of beats one and three.

Likewise, while sustaining the chord in Ex. 4, don't stop your strum mid-funk. Keep your pick hand moving, but off the strings.

Finally, a little two-bar jam brings it all together (Ex. 5).